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Chen et al.

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(54) **METHOD FOR NON-RESIST NANOLITHOGRAPHY**

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **H01L 29/66795** (2013.01); **H01L 21/3086** (2013.01); **H01L 21/0337** (2013.01);
(Continued)

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC H01L 29/66795; H01L 21/3086; H01L 21/0337; H01L 21/308; H01L 21/31144; H01L 21/28132

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See application file for complete search history.

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 107 days.

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(21) Appl. No.: **16/883,195**

Primary Examiner — Patricia D Valenzuela

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(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Slater Matsil, LLP

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Related U.S. Application Data

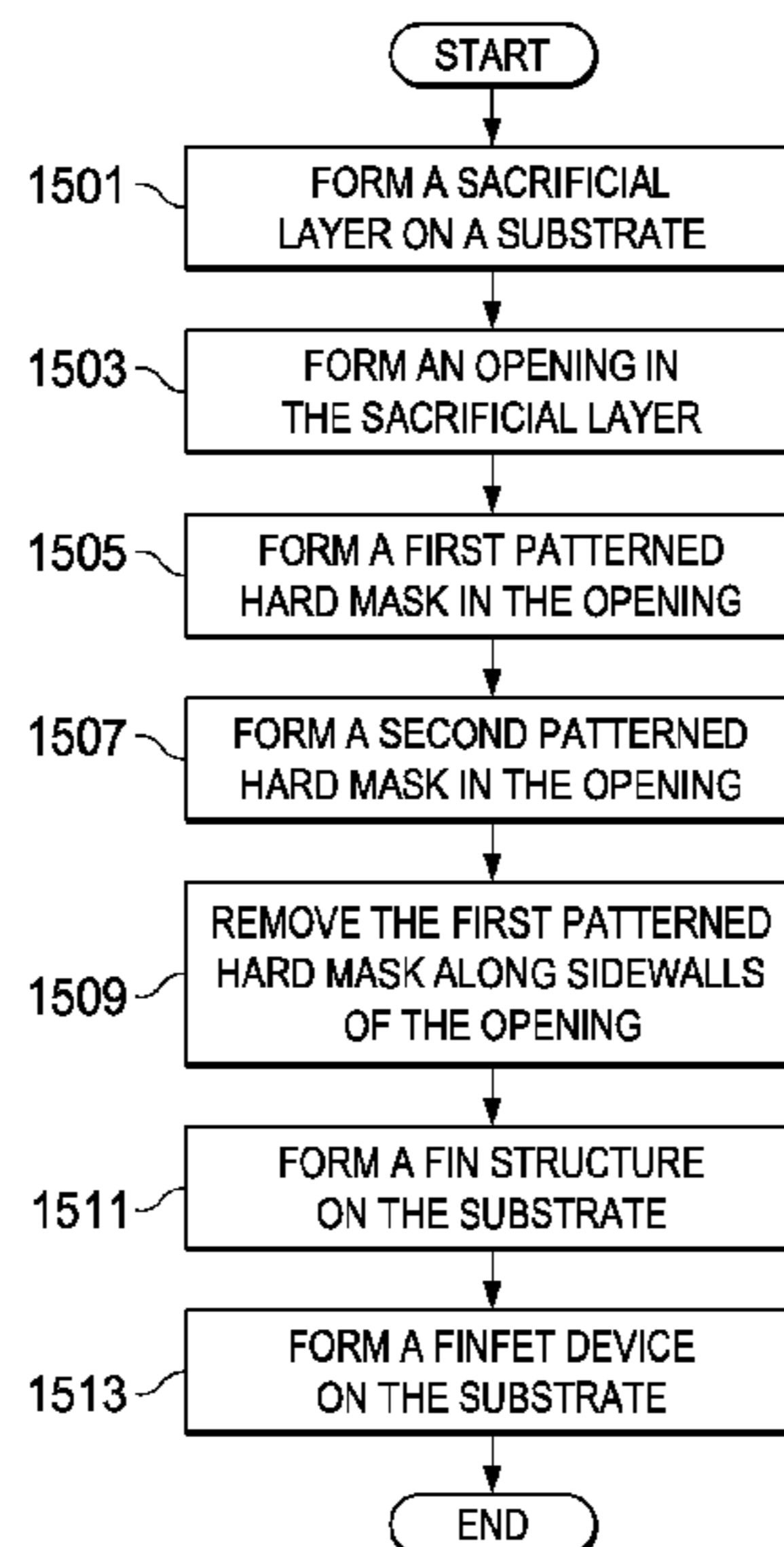
A method for forming a semiconductor device is provided. A first patterned mask is formed on the substrate, the first patterned mask having a first opening therein. A second patterned mask is formed on the substrate in the first opening, the first patterned mask and the second patterned mask forming a combined patterned mask. The combined patterned mask is formed having one or more second openings, wherein one or more unmasked portions of the substrate are exposed. Trenches that correspond to the one or more unmasked portions of the substrate are formed in the substrate in the one or more second openings.

(60) Continuation of application No. 15/962,398, filed on Apr. 25, 2018, now Pat. No. 10,665,696, which is a
(Continued)

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H01L 29/66 (2006.01)
H01L 21/308 (2006.01)

(Continued)

20 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



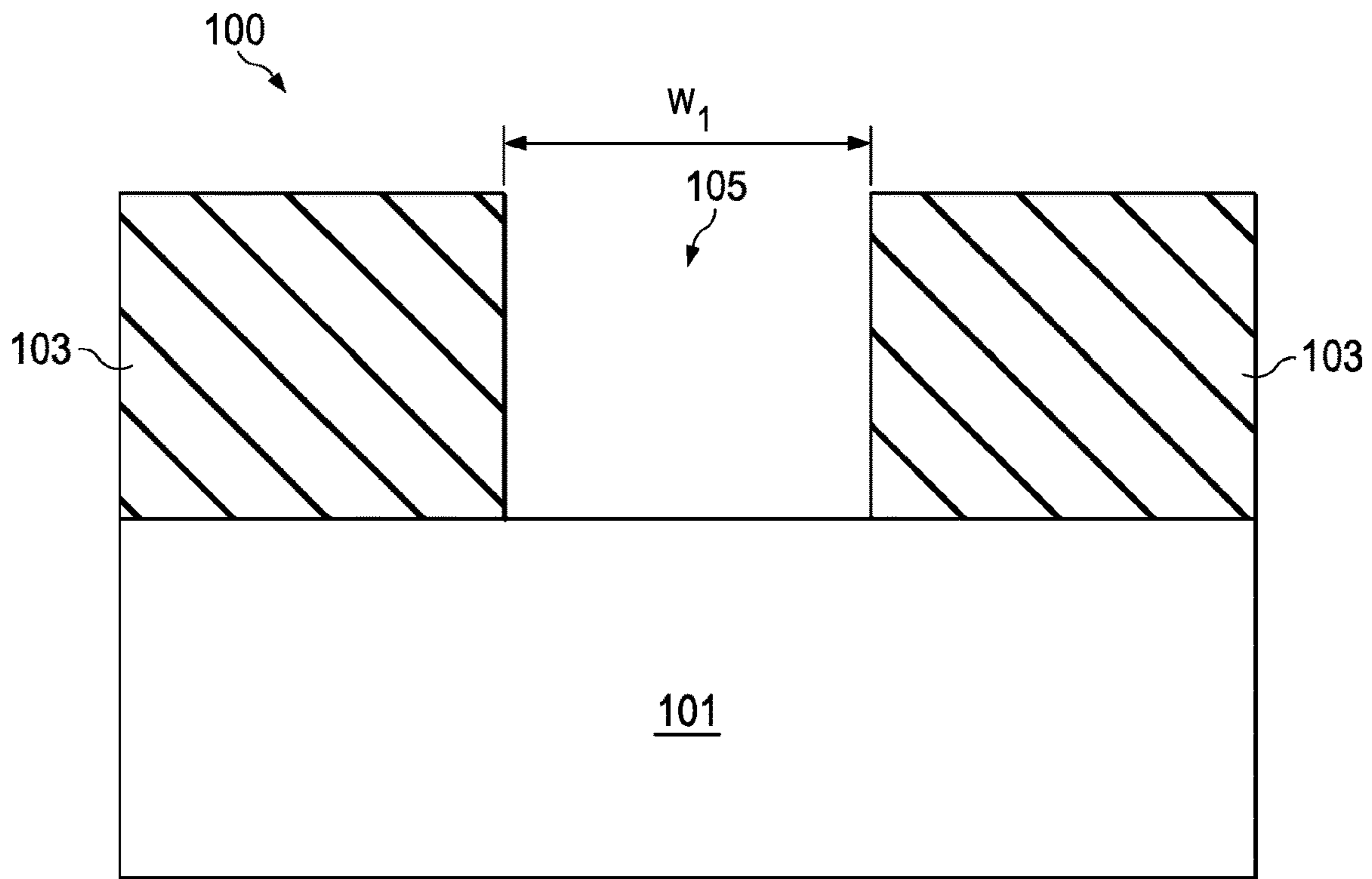


FIG. 1

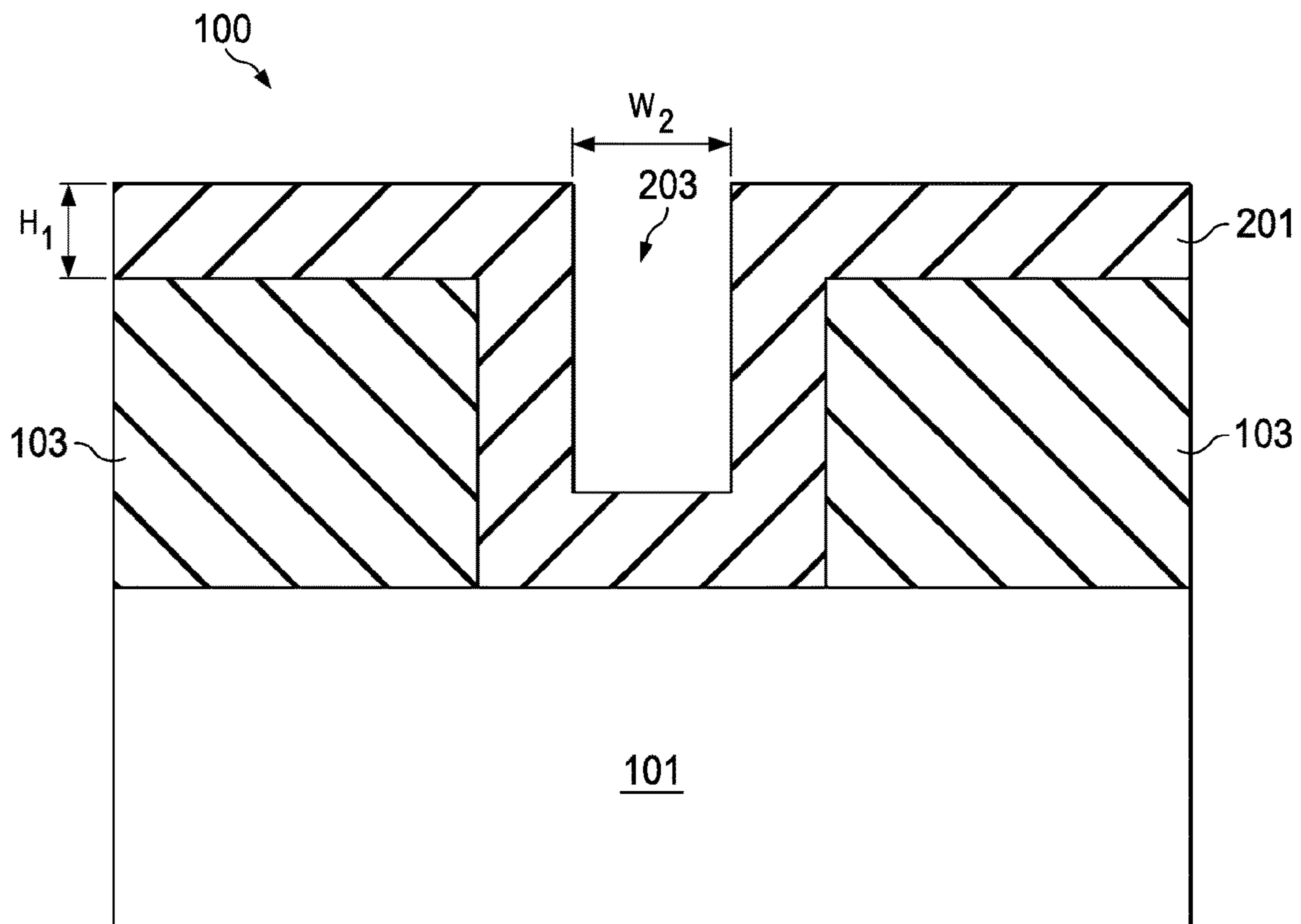


FIG. 2

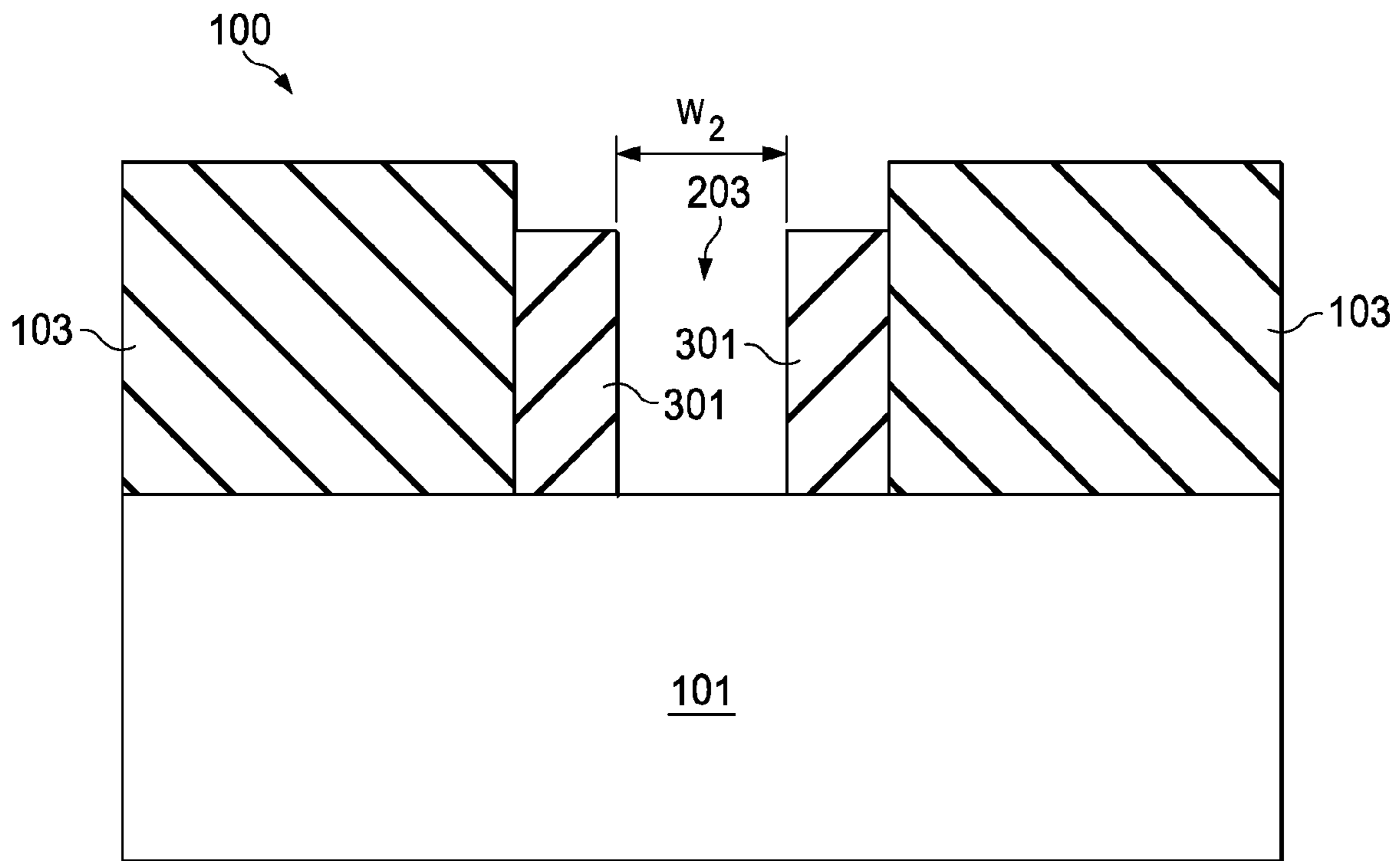


FIG. 3

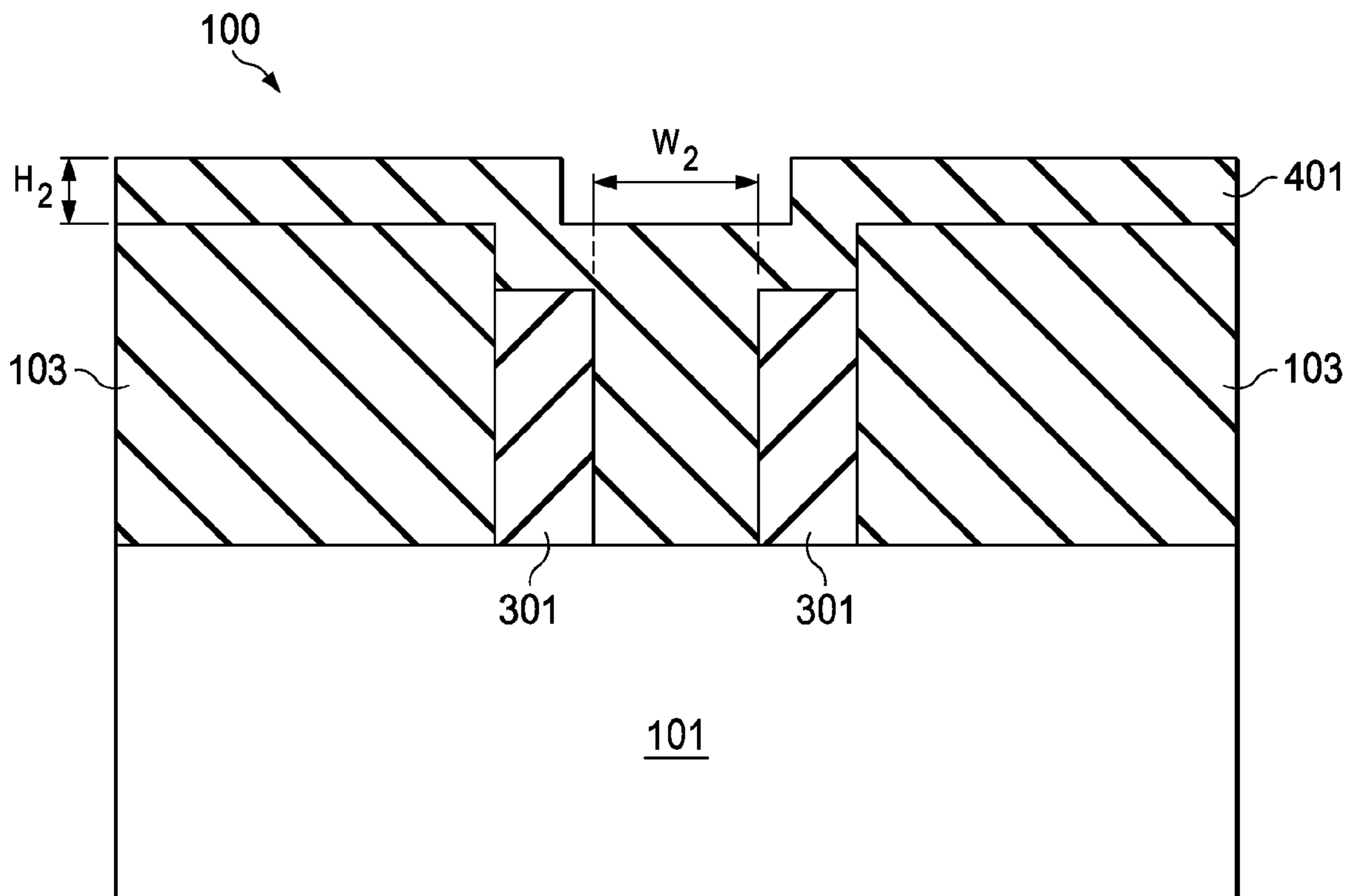


FIG. 4

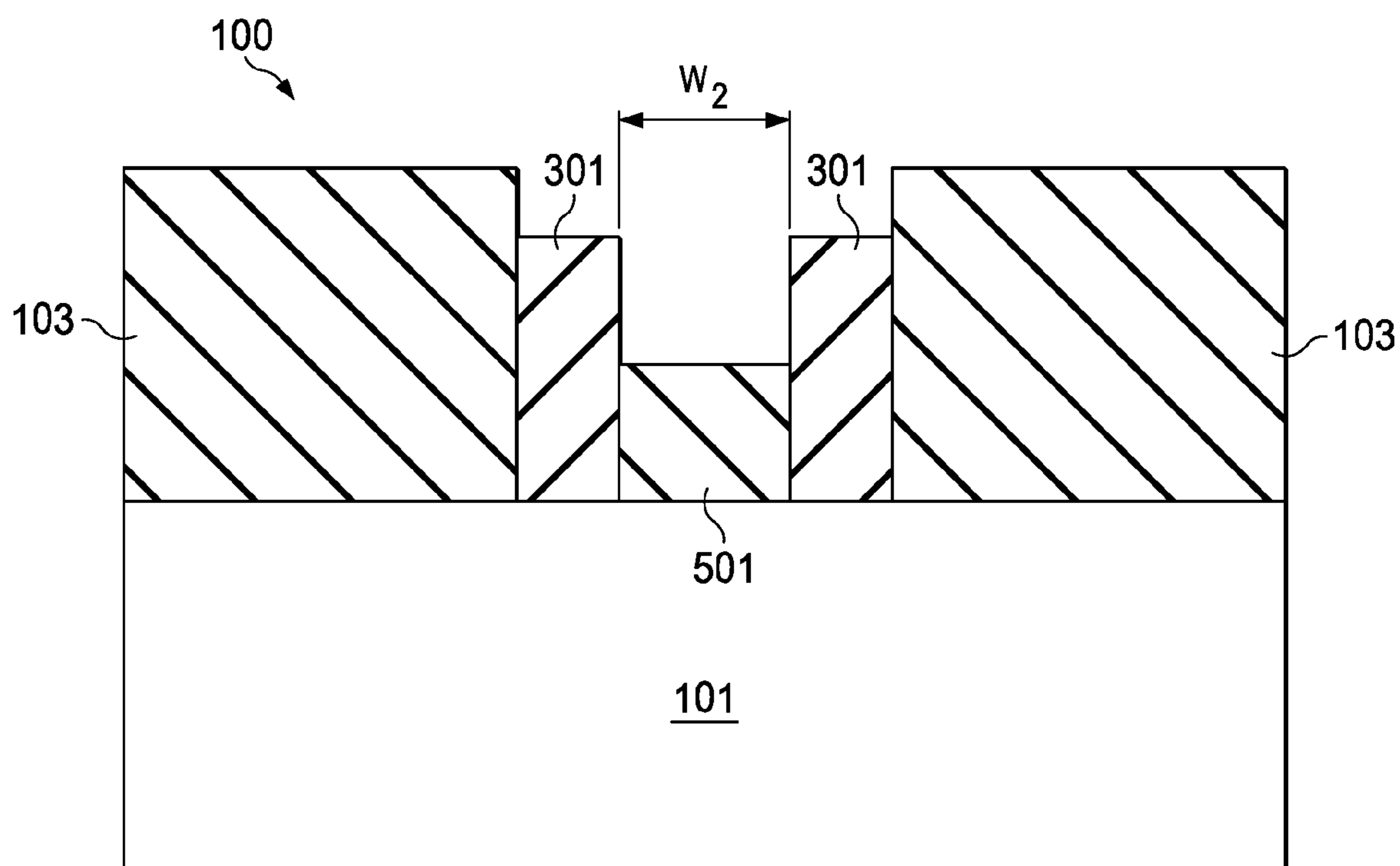


FIG. 5

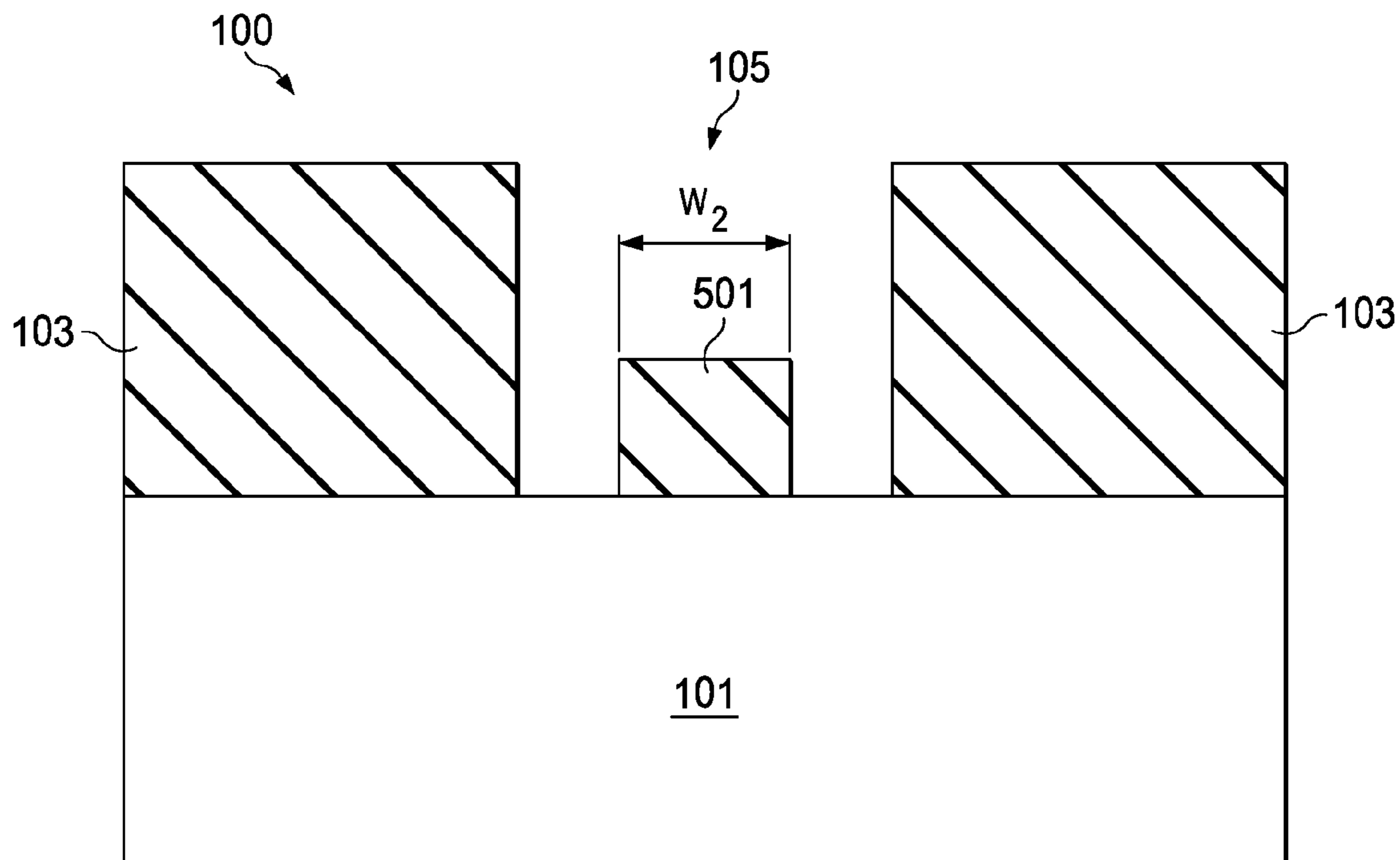


FIG. 6

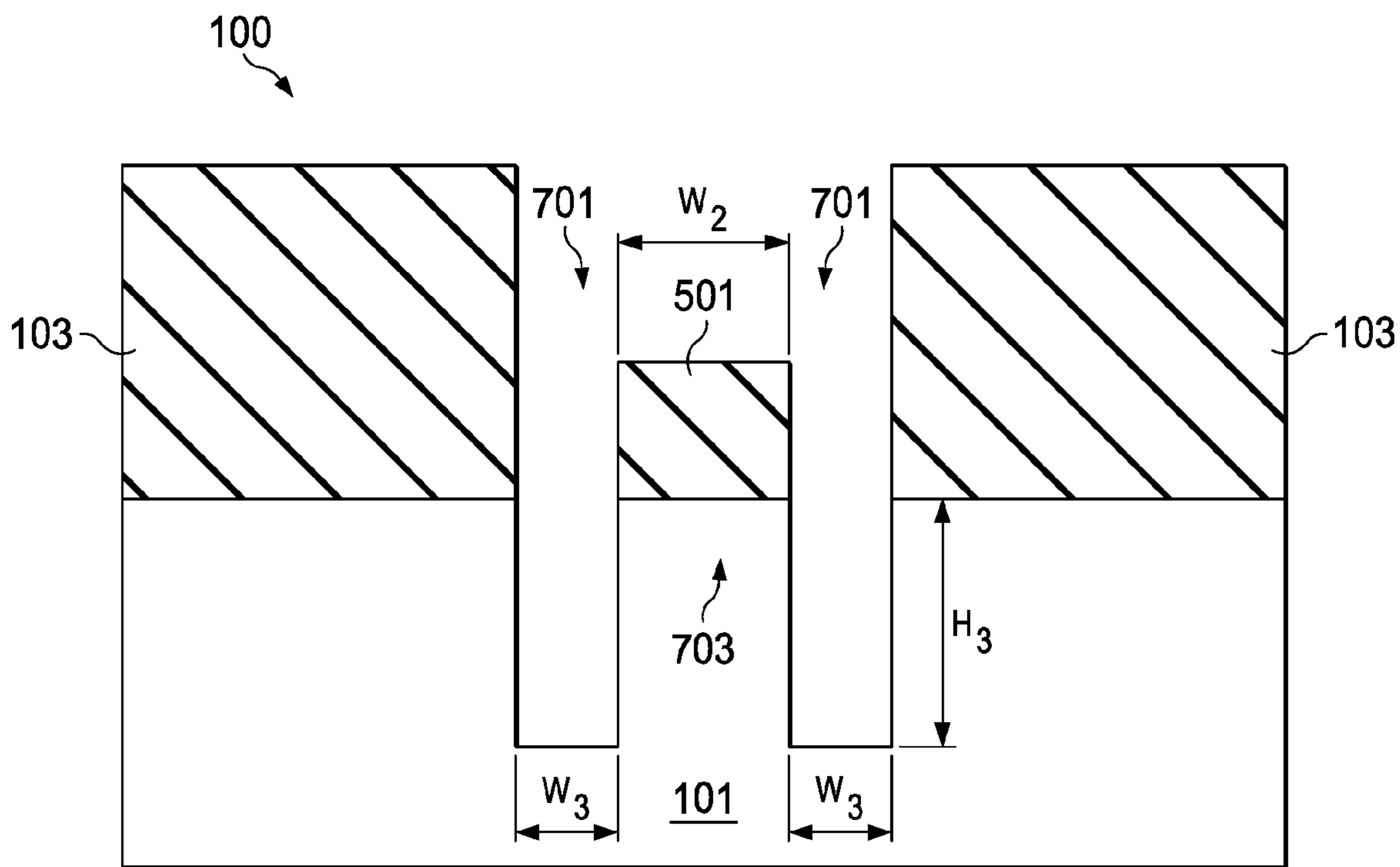


FIG. 7

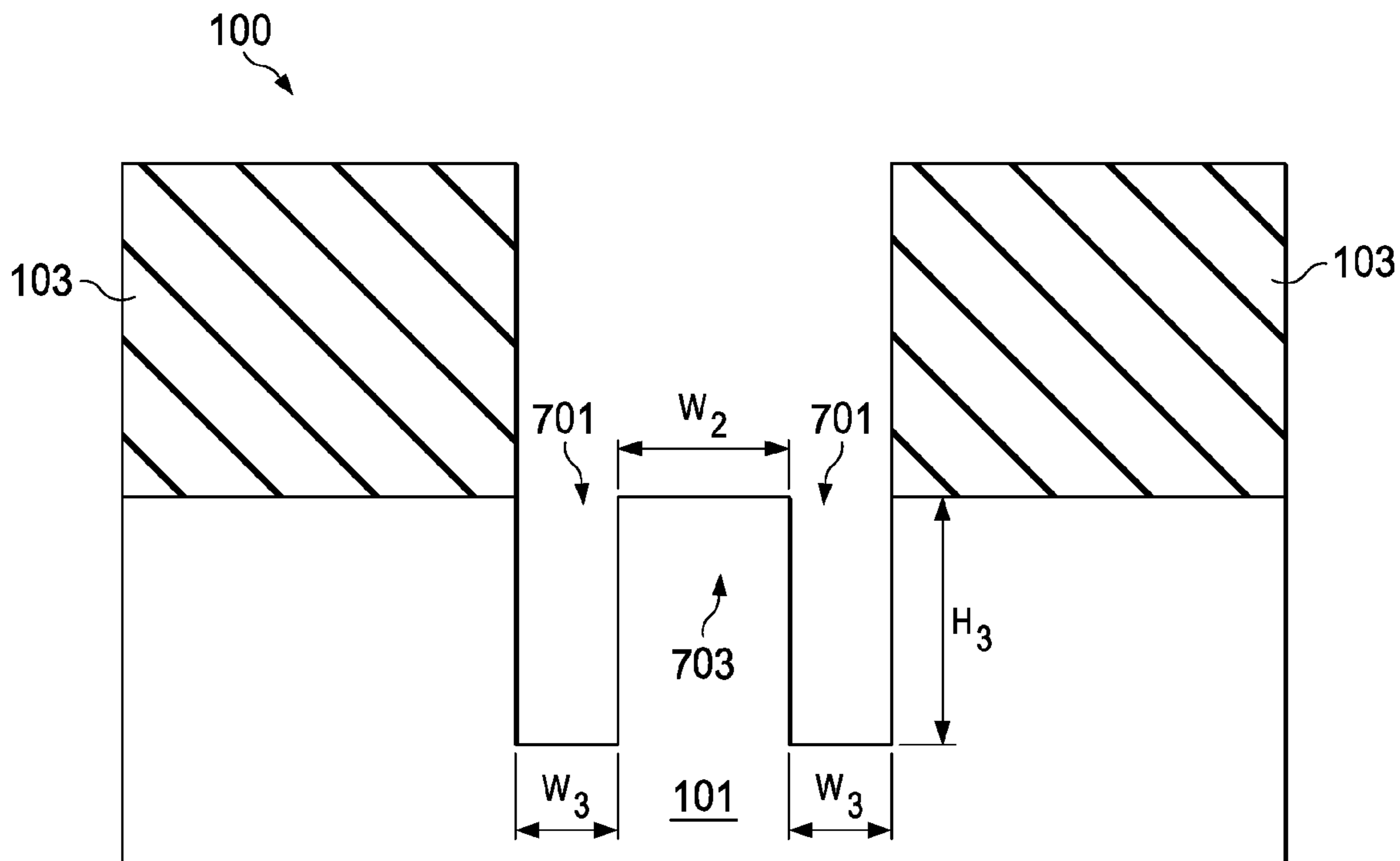


FIG. 8

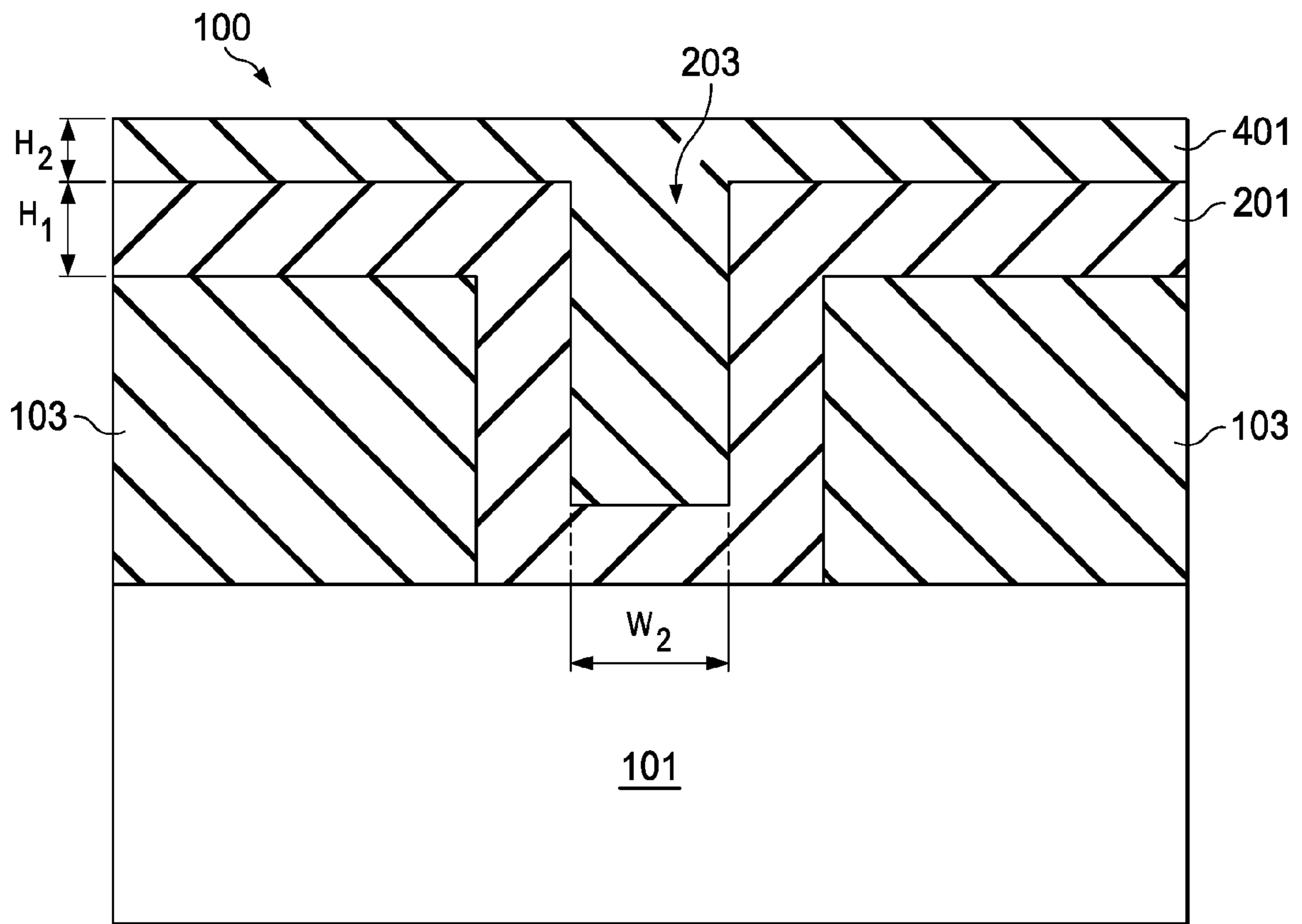


FIG. 9

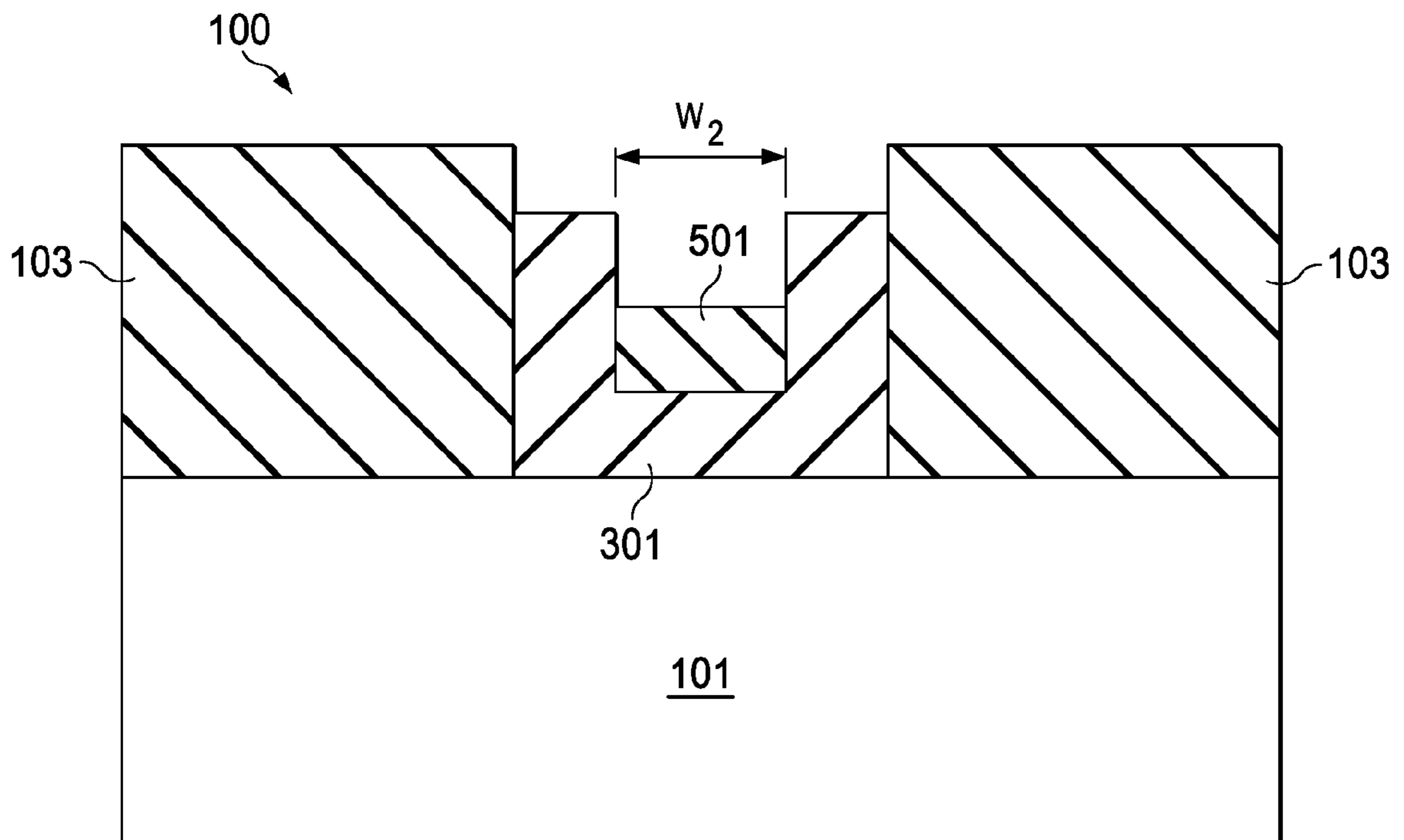


FIG. 10

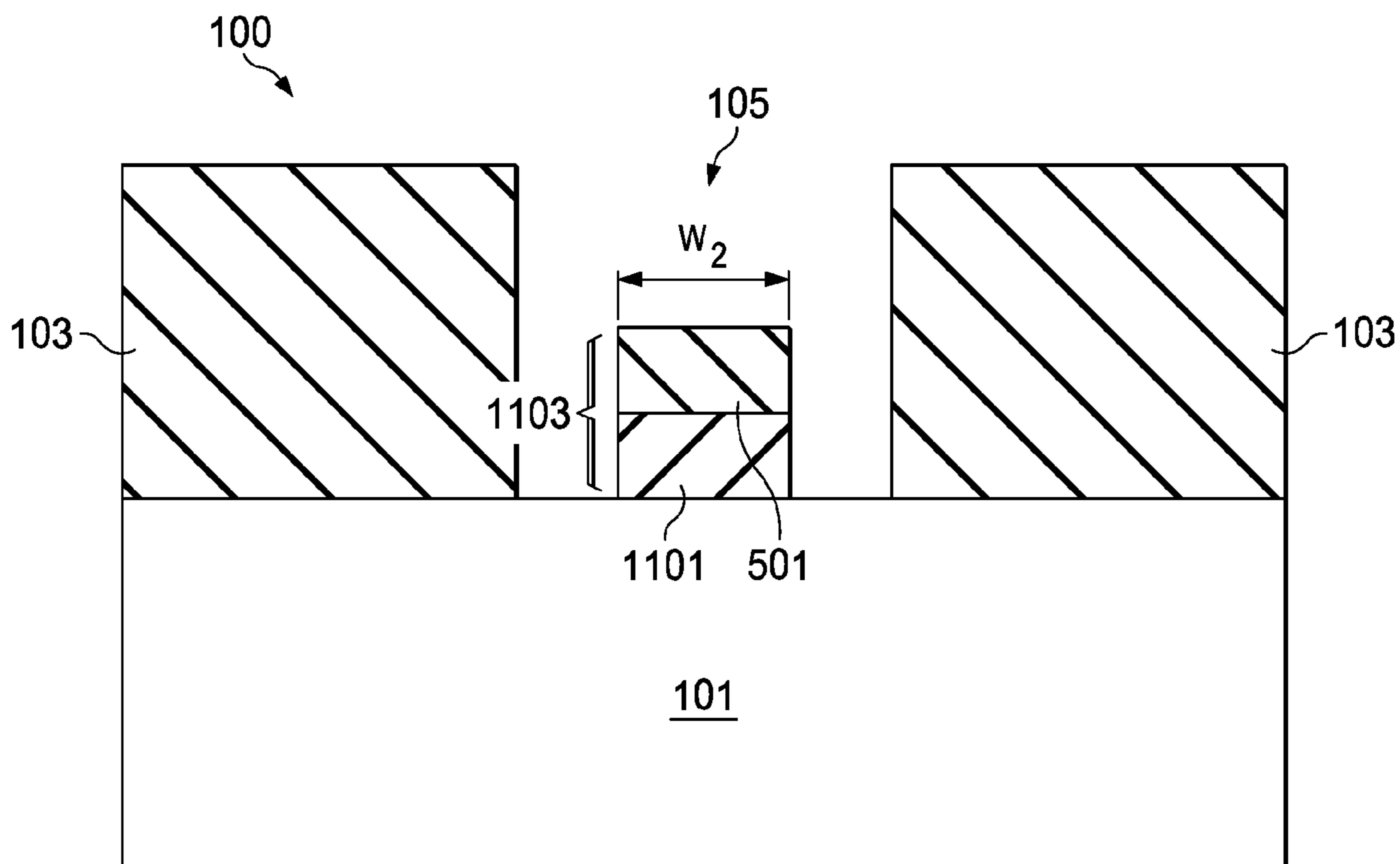


FIG. 11

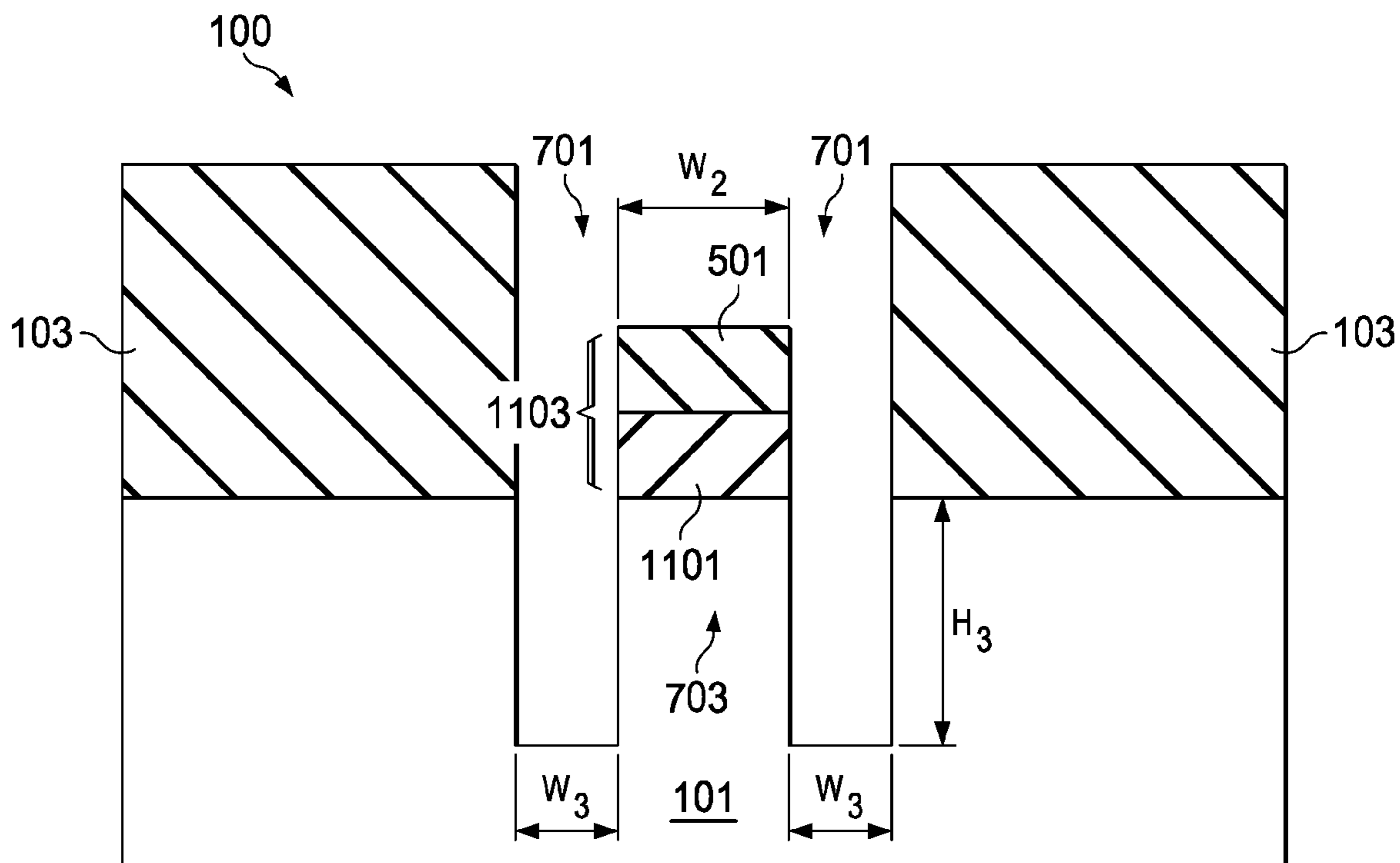


FIG. 12

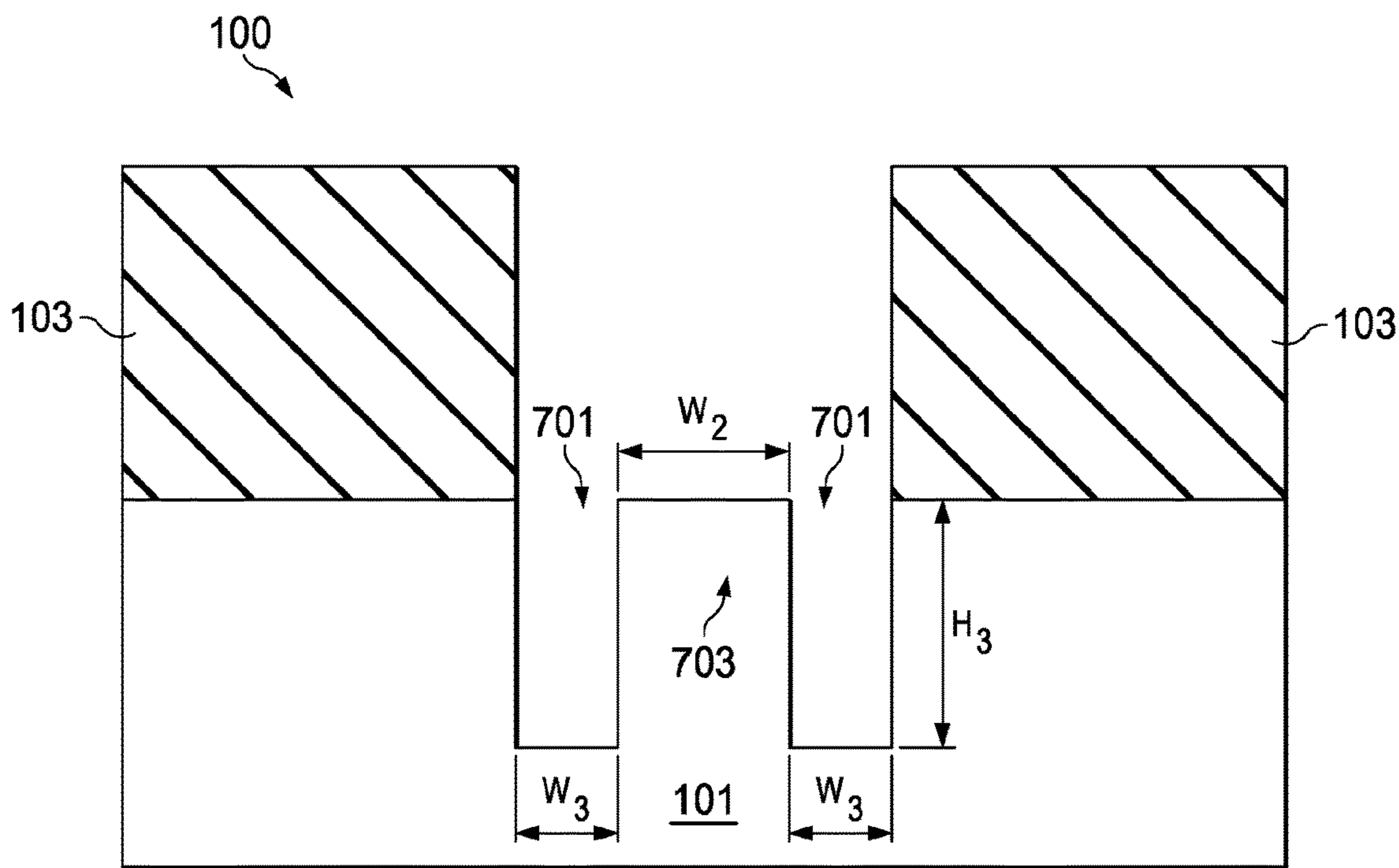


FIG. 13

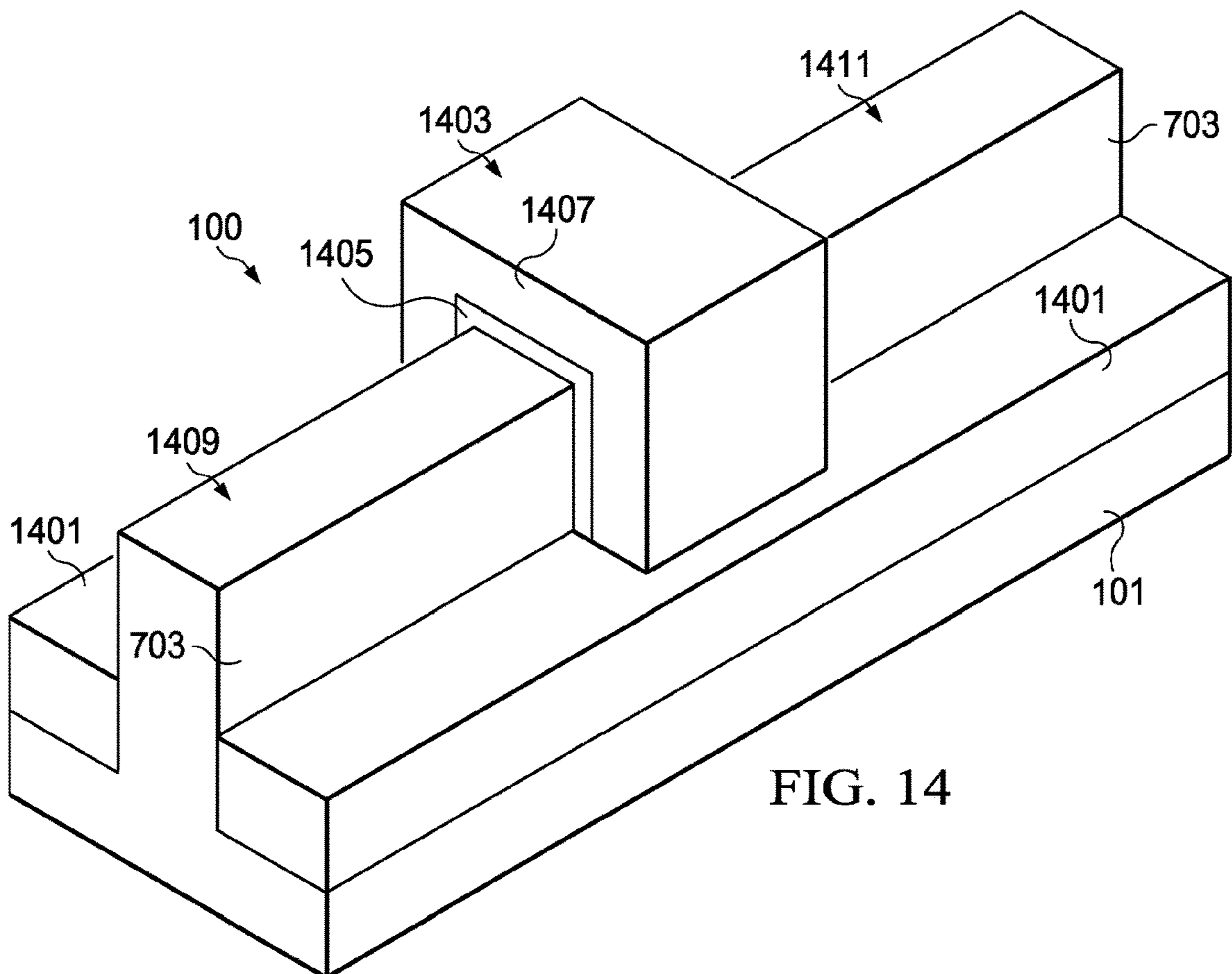


FIG. 14

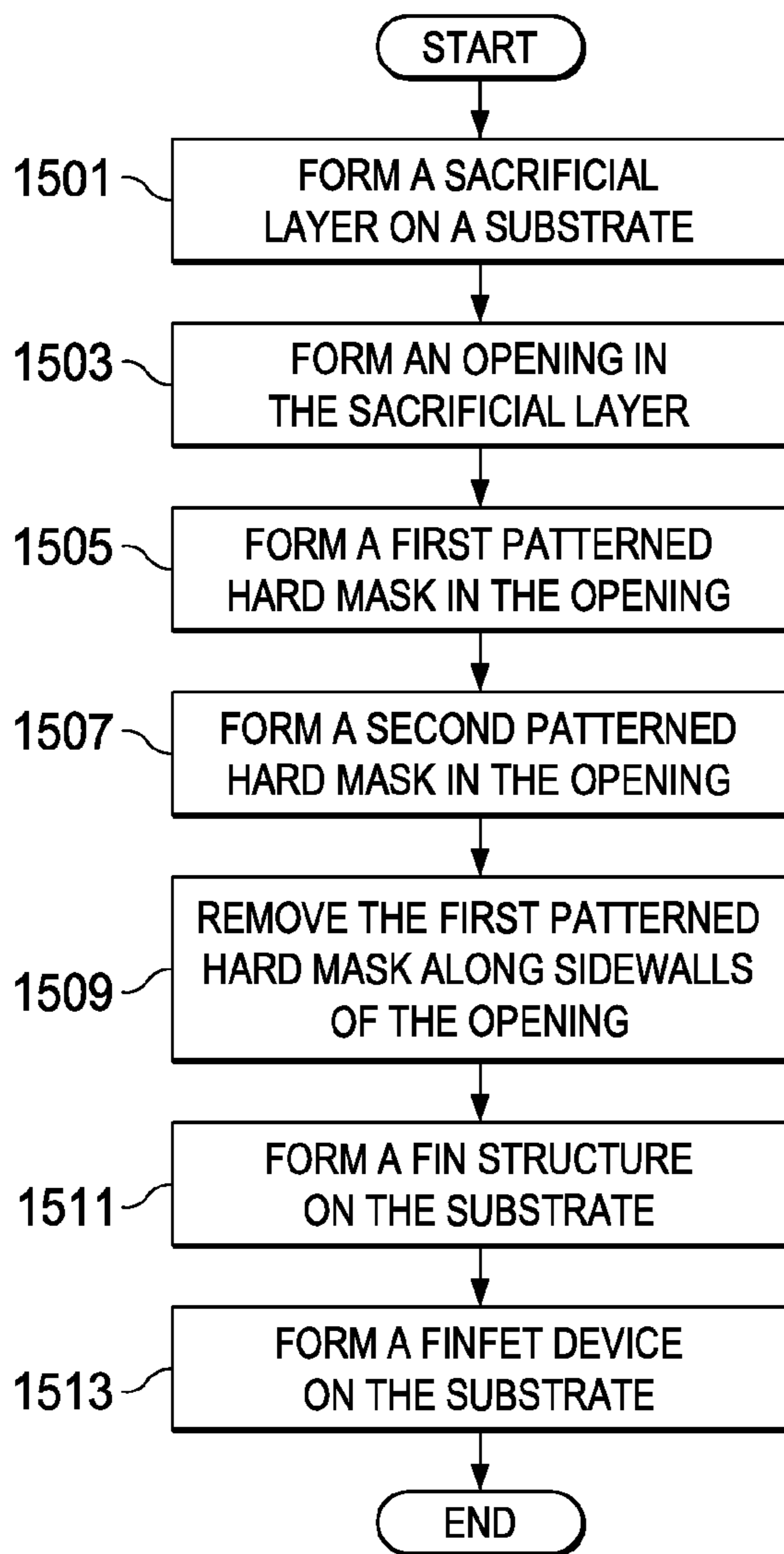


FIG. 15

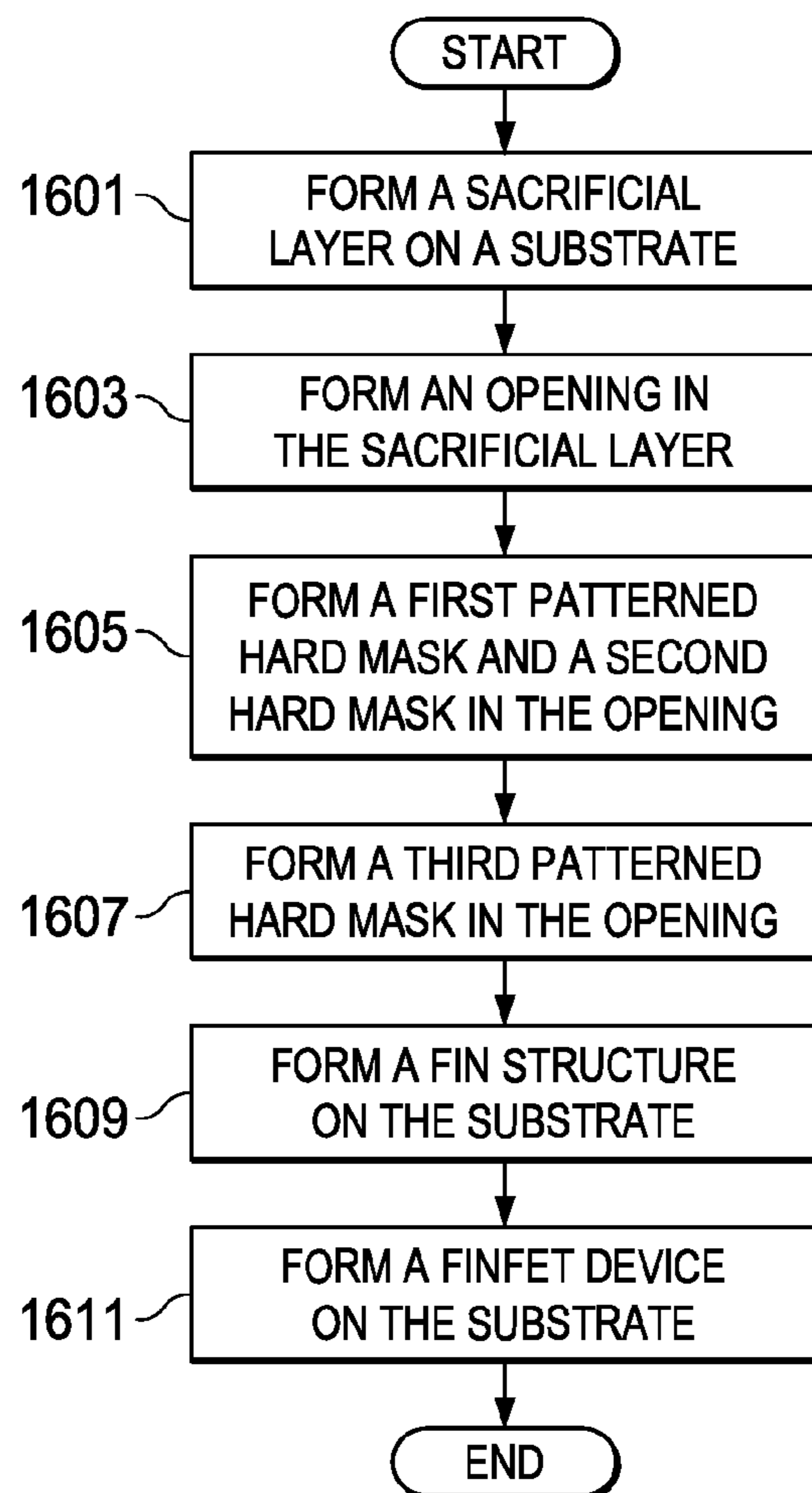


FIG. 16

METHOD FOR NON-RESIST NANOLITHOGRAPHY

PRIORITY CLAIM

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/962,398, filed on Apr. 25, 2018, which is a division of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/285,281, filed May 22, 2014, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,972,702 issued on May 15, 2018, which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

Semiconductor manufacturers routinely fabricate multi-layer semiconductor structures to achieve a high level of integration. The semiconductor structures have multiple devices, such as transistors, formed in a substrate. Multiple metallization layers are formed over the substrate to electrically interconnect the devices and form functional circuits. The metallization layers may also include other devices, such as capacitors and resistors.

Each layer of a multilayer semiconductor structure is patterned one or more times using lithography techniques such as photolithography, electron-beam lithography, and the like. As the technology node shrinks the lithography techniques face many challenges. For example, photolithography and electron-beam lithography methods are limited by light diffraction and electron scattering, respectively. Fabrication problems are particularly severe for the semiconductor structures with sub-10 nm features.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Aspects of the present disclosure are best understood from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying figures. It is noted that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of the various features may be arbitrarily increased or reduced for clarity of discussion.

FIGS. 1-13 are cross-sectional views illustrating various intermediate stages of forming a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments.

FIG. 14 is a three-dimensional view illustrating a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments.

FIG. 15 is a flowchart illustrating a semiconductor device fabrication method in accordance with some embodiments.

FIG. 16 is a flowchart illustrating a semiconductor device fabrication method in accordance with some embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following disclosure provides many different embodiments, or examples, for implementing different features of the provided subject matter. Specific examples of components and arrangements are described below to simplify the present disclosure. These are, of course, merely examples and are not intended to be limiting. For example, the formation of a first feature over or on a second feature in the description that follows may include embodiments in which the first and second features are formed in direct contact, and may also include embodiments in which additional features may be formed between the first and second features, such that the first and second features may not be in direct contact. In addition, the present disclosure may repeat reference numerals and/or letters in the various examples. This repetition is for the purpose of simplicity and

clarity and does not in itself dictate a relationship between the various embodiments and/or configurations discussed.

Further, spatially relative terms, such as “beneath,” “below,” “lower,” “above,” “upper” and the like, may be used herein for ease of description to describe one element or feature’s relationship to another element(s) or feature(s) as illustrated in the figures. The spatially relative terms are intended to encompass different orientations of the device in use or operation in addition to the orientation depicted in the figures. The apparatus may be otherwise oriented (rotated 90 degrees or at other orientations) and the spatially relative descriptors used herein may likewise be interpreted accordingly.

A method for forming a semiconductor device using fewer lithography processes is provided. In particular, a method for forming a fin structure will be described in greater detail below. However, persons skilled in the art will recognize that similar methods may be also applied to form other semiconductor structures, such as, for example, nanowires, and the like. As described below in greater detail, the method utilizes hard masks that are patterned using self-aligned processes and relies less on photolithography processing. Advantageous features of the method include that the method is suitable for fabrication sub-10 nm features and is not limited, for example, by light diffraction, electron scattering, or the like.

FIGS. 1-9 are cross-sectional views illustrating various intermediate stages of forming a semiconductor device 100 in accordance with some embodiments. Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown the semiconductor device 100 comprising a substrate 101 and a sacrificial layer 103 over the substrate 101, the sacrificial layer 103 having an opening 105. The substrate 101 may comprise, for example, bulk silicon, doped or undoped, silicon germanium (SiGe), III-V compounds such as GaAs, InP, GaP, GaN, AlGaIn, InGaIn and the like, or an active layer of a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) substrate. Generally, an SOI substrate comprises a layer of a semiconductor material, such as silicon, silicon germanium, silicon carbide, or the like, formed on an insulator layer. The insulator layer may be, for example, a buried oxide (BOX) layer or a silicon oxide layer. The insulator layer is provided on a substrate, typically a silicon substrate or a glass substrate. Other substrates, such as multi-layered or gradient substrates may also be used.

The sacrificial layer 103 may comprise one more layers formed of materials such as insulators, semiconductors, or metals. As discussed in greater detail below, the sacrificial layer 103 is utilized to aid the fin structure formation process and, for example, may be used as a mask layer. In some embodiments, the sacrificial layer 103 is removed after forming the fin structure.

The sacrificial layer 103 may be patterned to form the opening 105 using, for example, photolithography techniques. Generally, a photoresist material (not shown) is deposited, irradiated (exposed), and developed to remove a portion of the photoresist material. The remaining photoresist material protects the underlying material from subsequent processing steps, such as etching. In this example, the photoresist material is used to form a patterned mask (not shown) to protect sections of the sacrificial layer 103 while etching the opening 105 in the sacrificial layer 103. Subsequently, the photoresist material is removed using, for example, an ashing process in combination with a wet clean process.

The sacrificial layer 103 is etched to remove exposed portions of the sacrificial layer 103 to form opening 105 in the sacrificial layer 103. The sacrificial layer 103 is etched,

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for example, by an anisotropic wet etch process or an anisotropic dry etch process. The anisotropic dry etch process may include physical dry etching, chemical dry etching, reactive ion etching, or similar. In an embodiment, the opening **105** is formed having a first width W_1 between about 10 nm and about 110 nm.

Referring to FIG. 2, a first hard mask **201** is formed over the sacrificial layer **103** and in the opening **105**. In some embodiments, the first hard mask **201** may comprise Al_2O_3 , AlN, AlP, AlAs, $Al_xTi_yO_z$, $Al_xCr_yO_z$, $Al_xZr_yO_z$, $Al_xHf_yO_z$, $Al_xSi_yO_z$, B_2O_3 , BN, $B_xP_yO_z$, BiO_x , $Bi_xTi_yO_z$, BaS, BaTiO₃, CdS, CdSe, CdTe, CaO, CaS, CaF₂, CuGaS₂, CoO, CoO_x, Co₃O₄, CrO_x, CeO₂, Cu₂O, CuO, Cu_xS, FeO, FeO_x, GaN, GaAs, GaP, Ga₂O₃, GeO₂, HfO₂, Hf₃N₄, HgTe, InP, InAs, In₂O₃, In₂S₃, InN, InSb, LaAlO₃, La₂S₃, La₂O₂S, La₂O₃, La₂CoO₃, La₂NiO₃, La₂MnO₃, MoN, Mo₂N, Mo_xN, MoO₂, MgO, MnO_x, MnS, NiO, NbN, Nb₂O₅, PbS, PtO₂, PO_x, P_xB_yO_z, RuO, Sc₂O₃, Si₃N₄, SiO₂, SiC, $Si_xTi_yO_z$, $Si_xZr_yO_z$, $Si_xHf_yO_z$, SnO₂, Sb₂O₅, SrO, SrCO₃, SrTiO₃, SrS, SrS_{1-x}Se_x, SrF₂, Ta₂O₅, TaO_xN_y, Ta₃N₅, TaN, TaN_x, Ti_xZr_yO_z, TiO₂, TiN, Ti_xSi_yN_z, Ti_xHf_yO_z, VO_x, WO₃, W₂N, W_xN, WS₂, W_xC, Y₂O₃, Y₂O₂S, ZnS_{1-x}Se_x, ZnO, ZnS, ZnSe, ZnTe, ZnF₂, ZrO₂, Zr₃N₄, PrO_x, Nd₂O₃, Sm₂O₃, Gd₂O₃, Dy₂O₃, Ho₂O₃, Er₂O₃, Tm₂O₃, Lu₂O₃, Ru, Pt, Pd, Rh, Ag, Al, Ir, Cu, Ti, Ta, Mo, W, Ni, Co, Fe, and combinations thereof. The first hard mask **201** may be formed using, for example, atomic layer deposition (ALD) method. The ALD method provides conformal step coverage for the opening **105**, as well as accurate thickness control, excellent uniformity, and low defect density for the first hard mask **201**. In addition, the ALD method has high reproducibility. In an embodiment, the first hard mask **201** is formed having a first thickness H_1 between about 1 nm and about 50 nm.

Referring further to FIG. 2, the opening **105** is partially filled by the first hard mask **201** and a nanogap **203** is formed. In an embodiment, the nanogap **203** is formed having a second width W_2 between about 1 nm and about 20 nm.

As will be explained in greater detail below, the first hard mask **201** will be used to create a mask in the nanogap **203**, after which the first hard mask **201** will be removed to expose portions of the underlying substrate **101**. The exposed portions of the substrate **101** will be etched to form trenches, with the substrate **101** between adjacent trenches forming a fin. Accordingly the width of the nanogap corresponds to the width between the adjacent trenches, e.g., a width of the fin to be formed in subsequent processing steps. As such, a width of the opening **105** and a thickness of the first hard mask **201** may be adjusted to achieve a desired width of the nanogap **203** and, hence, a desired width of the subsequently formed fin.

Referring now to FIG. 3, the first hard mask **201** is anisotropically etched to form a first patterned hard mask **301** in accordance with some embodiments. The etching process may recess an upper surface of the first patterned hard mask **301** below an upper surface of the sacrificial layer **103** as illustrated in FIG. 3. In other embodiments, the upper surface of the first patterned hard mask **301** may be above the upper surface of the sacrificial layer **103**. In some embodiments, the first hard mask **201** is anisotropically etched using, for example, ion milling method. For example, in an embodiment in which the first hard mask **201** is formed of silicon oxide, the first hard mask **201** may be anisotropically etched using reactive ion etching method with a tetrafluoromethane (CF₄) plasma. In another embodiment in which the first hard mask **201** is formed of Al₂O₃, the first hard mask **201** may be anisotropically etched using reactive

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ion etching method with BCl₃/Ar plasma. Referring further to FIG. 3, in some embodiments, the sacrificial layer **103** is partially removed while etching the first hard mask **201**.

Referring to FIG. 4, a second hard mask **401** is formed over the sacrificial layer **103** and the first patterned hard mask **301** in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, the second hard mask **401** may comprise Al₂O₃, MN, AlP, AlAs, $Al_xTi_yO_z$, $Al_xCr_yO_z$, $Al_xZr_yO_z$, $Al_xHf_yO_z$, $Al_xSi_yO_z$, B_2O_3 , BN, $B_xP_yO_z$, BiO_x , $Bi_xTi_yO_z$, BaS, BaTiO₃, CdS, CdSe, CdTe, CaO, CaS, CaF₂, CuGaS₂, CoO, CoO_x, Co₃O₄, CrO_x, CeO₂, Cu₂O, CuO, Cu_xS, FeO, FeO_x, GaN, GaAs, GaP, Ga₂O₃, GeO₂, HfO₂, Hf₃N₄, HgTe, InP, InAs, In₂O₃, In₂S₃, InN, InSb, LaAlO₃, La₂S₃, La₂O₂S, La₂O₃, La₂CoO₃, La₂NiO₃, La₂MnO₃, MoN, Mo₂N, Mo_xN, MoO₂, MgO, MnO_x, MnS, NiO, NbN, Nb₂O₅, PbS, PtO₂, PO_x, P_xB_yO_z, RuO, Sc₂O₃, Si₃N₄, SiO₂, SiC, $Si_xTi_yO_z$, $Si_xZr_yO_z$, $Si_xHf_yO_z$, SnO₂, Sb₂O₅, SrO, SrCO₃, SrTiO₃, SrS, SrS_{1-x}Se_x, SrF₂, Ta₂O₅, TaO_xN_y, Ta₃N₅, TaN, TaN_x, Ti_xZr_yO_z, TiO₂, TiN, Ti_xSi_yN_z, Ti_xHf_yO_z, VO_x, WO₃, W₂N, W_xN, WS₂, W_xC, Y₂O₃, Y₂O₂S, ZnS_{1-x}Se_x, ZnO, ZnS, ZnSe, ZnTe, ZnF₂, ZrO₂, Zr₃N₄, PrO_x, Nd₂O₃, Sm₂O₃, Eu₂O₃, Gd₂O₃, Dy₂O₃, Ho₂O₃, Er₂O₃, Tm₂O₃, Lu₂O₃, Ru, Pt, Pd, Rh, Ag, Al, Ir, Cu, Ti, Ta, Mo, W, Ni, Co, Fe, and combinations thereof. The second hard mask **401** may be formed using, for example, atomic layer deposition (ALD) method. In an embodiment, the second hard mask **401** is formed having a second thickness H_2 between about 0.5 nm and about 10 nm.

As described below in greater detail, the first patterned hard mask **301** and the second hard mask **401** are selectively etched to form a mask, which is subsequently used to pattern the substrate **101**. Therefore, in some embodiments, the first patterned hard mask **301** and the second hard mask **401** are formed of materials with different etch selectivities. For example, in an embodiment, the first patterned hard mask **301** is formed of silicon oxide and the second hard mask **401** is formed of silicon nitride. In another embodiment, the first patterned hard mask **301** is formed of Al₂O₃ and the second hard mask **401** is formed of Pt.

Referring to FIG. 5, the second hard mask **401** is selectively etched to form a second patterned hard mask **501** in accordance with some embodiments. In an embodiment with the first hard mask **201** formed of silicon oxide and the second hard mask **401** formed of silicon nitride, the second hard mask **401** may be selectively etched using, for example, hot phosphoric acid (H₃PO₄). In another embodiment with the first hard mask **201** formed of Al₂O₃ and the second hard mask **401** formed of Pt, the second hard mask **401** may be selectively etched using, for example, ion milling method, or the like. In an embodiment, the second patterned hard mask **501** is formed having the second width W_2 , which corresponds to a width of a fin formed in subsequent processes. Referring further to FIG. 5, in some embodiments, portions of the sacrificial layer **103** may be removed while etching the second hard mask **401**.

Referring to FIG. 6, in some embodiments, the first patterned hard mask **301** is selectively etched such that the second patterned hard mask **501** remains in the opening **105** of the sacrificial layer **103**. In an embodiment with the first patterned hard mask **301** formed of silicon oxide and the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of silicon nitride, the first patterned hard mask **301** is selectively etched using, for example, buffered hydrofluoric acid (HF). In another embodiment with the first patterned hard mask **301** formed of Al₂O₃ and the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of

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Pt, the first patterned hard mask **301** is selective etched using, for example, reactive ion etching method with BCl_3/Ar plasma.

Referring to FIG. 7, the second patterned hard mask **501** is used to pattern the substrate **101** and thereby form a fin structure **703** in the substrate **101**, in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, the second patterned hard mask **501** and the sacrificial layer **103** form a mask over the substrate **101**. The substrate **101** is etched to remove unprotected portions of the substrate **101** and to form trenches **701** in the substrate **101**, wherein a portion of the substrate **101** between adjacent trenches forms the fin structure **703**. The substrate **101** is etched, for example, by an anisotropic wet etch process or an anisotropic dry etch process. In an embodiment, the anisotropic wet etch may be performed on the substrate **101** comprising silicon using potassium hydroxide (KOH), ethylenediamine pyrocatechol (EDP), tetramethylammonium hydroxide (TMAH), or similar. The anisotropic dry etch process may include physical dry etching, chemical dry etching, reactive ion etching, ion milling, or similar. In an embodiment, the ions that are used in chemical dry etching of silicon are tetrafluoromethane (CF_4), sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6), nitrogen trifluoride (NF_3), chlorine gas (Cl_2), or hydrogen bromide (HBr). The typical reactive ion etching gasses for silicon are CF_4 , SF_6 and $\text{HBr}+\text{Cl}_2$. The fin structure **703** comprising a single fin as illustrated in FIG. 7 is presented as an example only. In other embodiments, the fin structure **703** may comprise multiple fins interposed between adjacent trenches in the substrate **101**.

In some embodiments, the trenches **701** are formed to have a third width W_3 between about 1 nm and about 50 nm. In an embodiment, the fin structure **703** is formed to have the second width W_2 , and a first height H_3 between about 1 nm and about 100 nm.

Referring to FIG. 8, the second patterned hard mask **501** is removed from a top surface of the fin structure **703** in accordance with some embodiments. In an embodiment with the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of silicon nitride, the second patterned hard mask **501** is removed, for example, by dipping in hot phosphoric acid (H_3PO_4). In an embodiment with the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of Pt, the second patterned hard mask **501** is removed using, for example, ion milling method with energetic Ar ions. Subsequently, the sacrificial layer **103** is removed from the top of the substrate **101** using a suitable etching process. In an embodiment, the sacrificial layer **103** is removed using, for example, ion milling method, wet chemical etching, or the like.

FIGS. 9-13 illustrate alternative steps, which may be performed to form the fin structure **703** in accordance with some embodiments. For example, after performing steps described above with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, alternative steps such as those illustrated in FIGS. 9-13 may be performed. Referring first to FIG. 9, starting from a step described above with reference to FIG. 2, the second hard mask **401** is formed over the first hard mask **201**, for example, using ALD method, or the like. In some embodiments, the second hard mask **401** completely fills the nanogap **203**, as illustrated in FIG. 9.

Referring to FIG. 10, the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** are anisotropically etched to form the first patterned hard mask **301** and the second patterned hard mask **501**, respectively, as illustrated in FIG. 10. Due to the etch selectivity between the materials of the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401**, in some embodiments, the upper surface of the second patterned hard mask **501** is

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lower than the upper surface of the first patterned hard mask **301**. In other embodiments, the upper surface of the second patterned hard mask **501** is higher than the upper surface of the first patterned hard mask **301**.

In some embodiments such as that illustrated in FIG. 10, the material of the first hard mask **201** has a lower etch rate than the material of the second hard mask **401**. As a result of the difference in the etch rates, the upper surface of the second patterned hard mask **501** is lower than the upper surface of the first patterned hard mask **301**. For example, in an embodiment with the first hard mask **201** formed of silicon oxide and the second hard mask **401** formed of silicon nitride, the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** are anisotropically etched using, for example, reactive ion etching method with a sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6) plasma, which will remove the silicon oxide of the first hard mask **201** slower than the silicon nitride of the second hard mask **401**. In another embodiment with the first hard mask **201** formed of Al_2O_3 and the second hard mask **401** formed of Pt, the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** are anisotropically etched using, for example, ion milling method, which will remove Al_2O_3 of the first hard mask **201** slower than Pt of the second hard mask **401**.

Referring to FIG. 11, in some embodiments, unprotected portions of the first patterned hard mask **301** are etched such that the second patterned hard mask **501** and a portion **1101** of the first patterned hard mask **301** remain in the opening **105** of the sacrificial layer **103**. The second patterned hard mask **501** and the portion **1101** of the first patterned hard mask **301** form a third patterned hard mask **1103** on the substrate **101** as illustrated in FIG. 11. In an embodiment with the first patterned hard mask **301** formed of silicon oxide and the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of silicon nitride, the first patterned hard mask **301** is anisotropically etched using, for example, reactive ion etching method with a tetrafluoromethane (CF_4) plasma. In another embodiment with the first patterned hard mask **301** formed of Al_2O_3 and the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of Pt, the first patterned hard mask **301** is anisotropically etched using, for example, reactive ion etching method with BCl_3/Ar plasma.

Referring further to FIGS. 9-11, in some embodiments, process steps described above with respect to FIG. 10 may be bypassed and the third patterned hard mask **1103** of FIG. 11 may be formed by anisotropic ally etching the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** of FIG. 9. For example, the material of the first hard mask **201** may have a higher etch rate than the material of the second hard mask **401**. As a result of the difference in the etch rates, once the first hard mask **201** is exposed, the first hard mask **201** extending along sidewalls of the sacrificial layer **103** is etched at a greater rate than the second hard mask **401**, such that the first hard mask **201** is removed to expose the underlying substrate **101** prior to the second hard mask **401** being consumed. In an embodiment with the first hard mask **201** formed of silicon oxide and the second hard mask **401** formed of silicon nitride, the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** may be anisotropically etched using, for example, reactive ion etching method with a tetrafluoromethane (CF_4) plasma, which will remove the silicon oxide of the first hard mask **201** faster than the silicon nitride of the second hard mask **401**. In another embodiment with the first hard mask **201** formed of Al_2O_3 and the second hard mask **401** formed of Pt, the first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** may be anisotropically etched using, for example, reactive ion etching method with BCl_3/Ar

plasma, which will remove Al_2O_3 of the first hard mask **201** faster than Pt of the second hard mask **401**.

Referring to FIG. **12**, the third patterned hard mask **1103** is used to pattern the substrate **101** and thereby form the fin structure **703** in the substrate **101**, in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, the fin structure **703** is formed using methods similar to those discussed above with reference to FIG. **7**.

Referring to FIG. **13**, the third patterned hard mask **1103** is removed from a top surface of the fin structure **703** in accordance with some embodiments. In an embodiment with the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of silicon nitride and the portion **1101** of the first patterned hard mask **301** formed of the silicon oxide, the second patterned hard mask **501** is removed, for example, by dipping in hot phosphoric acid (H_3PO_4), and the portion **1101** of the first patterned hard mask **301** is removed using, for example, buffered hydrofluoric acid (HF). In an embodiment with the second patterned hard mask **501** formed of Pt and the portion **1101** of the first patterned hard mask **301** formed of the Al_2O_3 , the second patterned hard mask **501** is removed using, for example, ion milling method with energetic Ar ions, and the portion **1101** of the first patterned hard mask **301** is removed using, for example, reactive ion etching method with BCl_3/Ar plasma. Subsequently, the sacrificial layer **103** is removed from the top of the substrate **101** using a suitable etching process. In an embodiment, the sacrificial layer **103** is removed using, for example, ion milling method, wet chemical etching, or the like.

Subsequently, the fin structure **703** may be utilized to form, for example, a fin field effect transistor (FinFET). FIG. **14** is a three-dimensional view illustrating the semiconductor device **100** represented as a FinFET device in accordance with some embodiments. In some embodiments, a liner oxide layer (not shown) such as silicon dioxide, or similar may be formed in the trenches **701**, for example, by thermal oxidation process. Subsequently, the trenches are filled with a dielectric material to form shallow trench isolation (STI) regions **1401**. The STI regions **1401** may comprise silicon oxide, silicon nitride, fluoride-doped silicate glass (FSG), or a low-K dielectric material, may also be used. In some embodiments, the STI regions **1401** may be formed using a high-density-plasma (HDP) CVD process, using silane (SiH_4) and oxygen (O_2) as reacting precursors. In other embodiments, the STI regions **1401** may be formed using a sub-atmospheric CVD (SACVD) process or high aspect-ratio process (HARP), wherein process gases may comprise tetraethylorthosilicate (TEOS) and ozone (O_3). In yet other embodiments, the STI regions **1401** may be formed using a spin-on-dielectric (SOD) process, such as hydrogen silsesquioxane (HSQ) or methyl silsesquioxane (MSQ). Other processes and materials may be used. A chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) may be performed to remove excess portion of the dielectric material forming the STI regions **1401**.

Subsequently, the STI regions **1401** are recessed, for example, by a selective wet etch or a selective dry etch process to expose portions of the fin structure **703** as illustrated in FIG. **14**. In an embodiment, the STI regions **1401** are recessed by blanket wet etch process using HF acid, or the like. In some embodiment, a doped well (not shown) is formed in the substrate **101**. The doped well may be formed, for example, by ion implantation method using suitable dopants.

Referring further to FIG. **14**, a gate stack **1403** is formed over the fin structure **703**. For example, the gate stack **1403** may be formed by depositing a dielectric layer and a

conductive layer over the fin structure **703** by CVD, physical vapor deposition (PVD), atomic layer deposition (ALD), other suitable methods, and/or combinations thereof. A photolithography patterning process, including depositing a photoresist material, exposing according to a desired pattern, and developing, is used to pattern the dielectric layer and the conductive layer to form a gate dielectric **1405** and a gate electrode **1407** of the gate stack **1403**, as illustrated in FIG. **14**. The etching processes may include, for example, dry etching, wet etching, and/or other etching methods (e.g., reactive ion etching). The dielectric layer may comprise any suitable material, such as silicon oxide, silicon nitride, or a high-k dielectric material. The conductive layer may comprise highly doped polysilicon, a metallic material, or any suitable conductive material.

In some embodiments, optional spacers (not shown) may be formed alongside the gate stack **1403**. The spacers may include one or more layers of a dielectric material such as silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon carbide, silicon oxynitride, or combinations thereof. The spacers may be formed by, for example, depositing a dielectric material over the gate structure and anisotropically etching the dielectric material.

A source region **1409** and a drain region **1411** are formed by doping the fin structure **703** on opposing sides of the gate stack **1403**, as illustrated in FIG. **14**. In some embodiments, the source region **1409** and the drain region **1411** are doped by ion implantation method using suitable dopants. For example, the source region **1409** and the drain region **1411** may be doped with n-type dopants, e.g., phosphorous or the like, to form an NMOS device in a p-doped substrate, or p-type dopants, e.g., boron or the like, to form a PMOS device in an n-doped substrate. Multiple doping processes may be utilized to create a desired doping profile, including, for example, lightly-doped drain (LDD) regions (not shown) and the like.

In some embodiments, an optional stress-inducing material (not shown) may be formed in the source region **1409** and the drain region **1411** along opposing sides of the gate stack **1403**. Generally, an epitaxial material having a different lattice constant may be formed over the fin structure **703** or may replace a portion of the fin structure **703**. The different lattice constants of the materials of the substrate **101** and the epitaxial material may induce a strain within the channel region, thereby increasing device performance. For example, in embodiments in which the substrate **101** is silicon, the epitaxial material may be Ge, SiC, GaAs, AlGaAs, SiGe, GaAsP, GaN, AlGaN, InGaN, or other suitable material.

In some embodiment, portions of the fin structure **703** may be removed and replaced with the stress-inducing material. For example, the STI regions **1401** may act as a mask for a selective etch process to recess exposed portions of the fin structure **703**. In some embodiments, the etching process may be performed using a chemical selected from Cl_2 , HBr, NF_3 , CF_4 , and SF_6 as an etching gas. A suitable semiconductor material may be epitaxially grown in recesses to form the source region **1409** and the drain region **1411**. The source region **1409** and the drain region **1411** may be in-situ doped during the epitaxial process and/or one or more subsequent doping process, e.g., an implant, may be performed.

The gate structure, as presented above with reference to FIG. **14**, is for illustrative purposes only and other FinFET designs may be implemented according to functional requirements for the semiconductor device **100**.

Further manufacturing steps may be performed on the semiconductor device **100**. For example, an interlayer dielectric (ILD) layer (not shown) may be deposited over the source region **1409**, the drain region **1411**, and the gate stack **1402**. The ILD layer is formed of one or more layers of dielectric material, such as silicon oxide, oxynitride, low-k dielectrics or other suitable materials, by a suitable technique, such as CVD, ALD, and spin-on (SOG). A CMP process may be performed to remove excessive dielectric material from the ILD layer.

Subsequently, contacts (not shown) are formed to provide electrical contacts to the source region **1409**, the drain region **1411**, and the gate stack **1403**. The ILD layer may be patterned using photolithography techniques to form trenches and vias. The contacts are formed by depositing a suitable material in the trenches and the vias of the ILD layer using various deposition and plating methods, or similar. In addition, the contacts may include one or more barrier/adhesion layers (not shown) to protect the ILD layer from diffusion and metallic poisoning. The barrier layer may comprise titanium, titanium nitride, tantalum, tantalum nitride, or other alternatives. The barrier layer may be formed using PVD, CVD, or the like.

The material of the contacts may comprise copper, a copper alloy, silver, gold, tungsten, tantalum, aluminum, and the like. In an embodiment, the steps for forming the barrier layer and the contacts may include blanket forming barrier layer, depositing a thin seed layer of a conductive material, and filling the trenches and the vias in the ILD layer with the conductive material, for example, by plating. A CMP is then performed to remove excess barrier layer and the conductive material.

FIG. **15** is a flowchart illustrating a method that may be used for fabricating a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments. The method starts with step **1501**, wherein a sacrificial layer **103** is formed on a substrate **101**. In step **1503**, an opening **105** is formed in the sacrificial layer **103**, as described above with reference to FIG. **1**. Subsequently, in step **1505**, a first hard mask **201** is formed over the sacrificial layer **103** and in the opening **105**, as described above with reference to FIG. **2**. In addition, the opening **105** is partially filled by the first hard mask **201**, and a nanogap **203** is formed in the sacrificial layer **103**, as described above with reference to FIG. **2**. The first hard mask **201** is etched to form a first patterned hard mask **301** as described above with reference to FIG. **3**. In step **1507**, a second hard mask **401** is formed over the sacrificial layer **103**, the first patterned hard mask **301**, and in the nanogap **203**. Subsequently, the second hard mask **401** is etched to form a second patterned hard mask **501**, as described above with reference to FIG. **5**. In step **1509**, the first patterned hard mask **301** is removed, as discussed above with reference to FIG. **6**. Next, in step **1511**, the substrate **101** is etched and trenches **701** are formed in the substrate **101**, as discussed above with reference to FIG. **7**. A portion of the substrate **101** between adjacent trenches **701** forms a fin structure **703**. Subsequently, the second patterned hard mask **501** is removed from the top of the fin structure **703**, as described above with reference to FIG. **8**. Finally, in step **1513**, a FinFET device is formed on the substrate **101**, as described above with reference to FIG. **14**. To form the FinFET device, the sacrificial layer **103** is removed from the substrate **101**, the STI regions **1401** are formed in the trenches **701**, a gate stack **1403** is formed over the fin structure **703**, and portions of the fin structure that are not protected by the gate stack are doped to form a source region **1409** and a drain region **1411**, as described above with respect to FIG. **14**.

FIG. **16** is a flowchart illustrating a method that may be used for fabricating a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments. The method starts with step **1601**, wherein a sacrificial layer **103** is formed on a substrate **101**. In step **1603**, an opening **105** is formed in the sacrificial layer **103**, as described above with reference to FIG. **1**. Subsequently, in step **1605**, a first hard mask **201** and a second hard mask **401** are formed over the sacrificial layer **103** and in the opening **105**, as described above with reference to FIG. **9**. The first hard mask **201** and the second hard mask **401** are etched to form a first patterned hard mask **301** and a second patterned hard mask **501**, respectively, as described above with reference to FIG. **10**. In step **1607**, portions of the first patterned hard mask **301** along sidewalls of the opening **105** are etched to expose portions of the substrate **101** in the opening **105**, and a third patterned hard mask **1103** is formed, as described above with respect to FIG. **11**. Next, in step **1609**, the substrate **101** is etched and trenches **701** are formed in the substrate **101**, as described above with reference to FIG. **12**. A portion of the substrate **101** between adjacent trenches **701** forms a fin structure **703**. Subsequently, the third patterned hard mask **1103** is removed from the top of the fin structure **703**, as described above with reference to FIG. **13**. Finally, in step **1611**, a FinFET device is formed on the substrate **101** as described above with reference to FIG. **14**. To form the FinFET device, the sacrificial layer **103** is removed from the substrate **101**, the STI regions **1401** are formed in the trenches **701**, a gate stack **1403** is formed over the fin structure **703**, and portions of the fin structure that are not protected by the gate stack are doped to form a source region **1409** and a drain region **1411** as described above with respect to FIG. **14**.

It should be noted that the FinFET device, as described above with reference to FIG. **14**, is provided for illustrative purposes only and other devices may be formed that use the fin structure **703** described above with reference to FIG. **1-13**. For example, in other embodiments, the fin structure **703** may be used to form protruding nanowires, and the like.

In an embodiment, a method includes: forming a patterned sacrificial layer over a substrate, the patterned sacrificial layer having a first opening exposing the substrate; depositing a first mask layer over the patterned sacrificial layer and in the first opening; etching the first mask layer to form a first patterned mask, the first patterned mask having a second opening exposing the substrate; depositing a second mask layer over the first patterned mask and in the second opening; etching the second mask layer to form a second patterned mask; removing the first patterned mask, the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer remaining after the removing; and etching trenches in the substrate using the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer as a combined mask.

In an embodiment, a portion of the substrate between neighboring trenches forms a fin structure, and the method further includes: forming a gate stack on the fin structure; and forming a source region and a drain region in the fin structure, the source region and the drain region being formed on opposing sides of the gate stack. In an embodiment, a portion of the substrate between neighboring trenches forms a nanowire structure. In an embodiment, the trenches have a width of between about 1 nm and about 50 nm. In an embodiment, after etching the first mask layer, a topmost surface of the first patterned mask is below a topmost surface of the patterned sacrificial layer. In an embodiment, after etching the second mask layer, a topmost surface of the second patterned mask is below the topmost surface of the first patterned mask. In an embodiment, the

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first opening has a first width, the second opening has a second width, and a combined width of the trenches is equal to a difference between the first width and the second width. In an embodiment, the first mask layer includes a first material and the second mask layer includes a second material, the first material and the second material having different etch selectivities. In an embodiment, the first material is silicon oxide, and the second material is silicon nitride. In an embodiment, the first material is Al_2O_3 , and the second material is Pt. In an embodiment, depositing the first mask layer includes depositing the first mask layer using an atomic layer deposition method to a thickness of between about 1 nm and about 50 nm. In an embodiment, depositing the second mask layer includes depositing the second mask layer using an atomic layer deposition method to a thickness of between about 0.5 nm and about 10 nm.

In an embodiment, a method includes: forming a patterned sacrificial layer over a substrate, the patterned sacrificial layer having a first opening exposing the substrate; forming a first patterned mask in the first opening, the first patterned mask having a second opening exposing the substrate; forming a second patterned mask in the second opening; removing the first patterned mask, the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer remaining after the removing, the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer forming a combined patterned mask; forming trenches in the substrate corresponding to the combined patterned mask; and forming semiconductor devices from portions of the substrate between neighboring trenches.

In an embodiment, forming the first patterned mask includes: depositing a first mask layer over the patterned sacrificial layer and in the first opening using an atomic layer deposition method; and etching the first mask layer without using photolithography to form the first patterned mask. In an embodiment, forming the second patterned mask includes: depositing a second mask layer over the first patterned mask and in the second opening using an atomic layer deposition method; and etching the second mask layer without using photolithography to form the second patterned mask. In an embodiment, the first patterned mask and the second patterned mask include different materials and have different etch selectivities.

In an embodiment, a method includes: forming a patterned sacrificial layer covering a first region of a substrate; forming a first patterned mask covering a second region of the substrate without using photolithography; forming a second patterned mask covering a third region of the substrate without using photolithography; removing the first patterned mask to expose the second region of the substrate; etching the second region of the substrate to form trenches in the substrate; and forming semiconductor devices from portions of the substrate between neighboring trenches.

In an embodiment, forming the first patterned mask includes: depositing a first mask layer over the patterned sacrificial layer and the substrate using an atomic layer deposition method; and etching the first mask layer to form the first patterned mask. In an embodiment, forming the second patterned mask includes: depositing a second mask layer over the first patterned mask and the substrate using an atomic layer deposition method; and etching the second mask layer to form the second patterned mask. In an embodiment, the first patterned mask and the second patterned mask include different materials and have different etch selectivities.

The foregoing outlines features of several embodiments so that those skilled in the art may better understand the

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aspects of the present disclosure. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the present disclosure as a basis for designing or modifying other processes and structures for carrying out the same purposes and/or achieving the same advantages of the embodiments introduced herein. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, and that they may make various changes, substitutions, and alterations herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

forming a patterned sacrificial layer over a substrate, the patterned sacrificial layer having a first opening exposing the substrate;

depositing a first mask layer over the patterned sacrificial layer and in the first opening;

etching the first mask layer to form a first patterned mask, the first patterned mask having a second opening exposing the substrate;

after etching the first mask layer to form the first patterned mask, depositing a second mask layer over the first patterned mask and in the second opening;

etching the second mask layer to form a second patterned mask;

removing the first patterned mask, wherein the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer remain after the first patterned mask is removed; and etching trenches in the substrate using the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer as a combined mask.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein a portion of the substrate between neighboring trenches forms a fin structure, further comprising:

forming a gate stack on the fin structure; and

forming a source region and a drain region in the fin structure, the source region and the drain region being formed on opposing sides of the gate stack.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein a portion of the substrate between neighboring trenches forms a nanowire structure.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the trenches have a width of between about 1 nm and about 50 nm.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein after etching the first mask layer, an upper surface of the first patterned mask is below an upper surface of the patterned sacrificial layer.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein after etching the second mask layer, an upper surface of the second patterned mask is below the upper surface of the first patterned mask.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the first opening has a first width, the second opening has a second width, and a combined width of the trenches is equal to a difference between the first width and the second width.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the first mask layer comprises a first material and the second mask layer comprises a second material, the first material and the second material having different etch selectivities.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the first material is silicon oxide, and the second material is silicon nitride.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the first material is Al_2O_3 , and the second material is Pt.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein depositing the first mask layer comprises depositing the first mask layer using an atomic layer deposition method to a thickness of between about 1 nm and about 50 nm.

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12. The method of claim **1**, wherein depositing the second mask layer comprises depositing the second mask layer using an atomic layer deposition method to a thickness of between about 0.5 nm and about 10 nm.

13. A method comprising:

forming a patterned sacrificial layer over a substrate, the patterned sacrificial layer having a first opening exposing the substrate;

forming a first patterned mask in the first opening, the first patterned mask having a second opening exposing the substrate;

after forming the first patterned mask in the first opening, forming a second patterned mask in the second opening;

removing the first patterned mask, wherein the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer remain after the first patterned mask is removed, the second patterned mask and the patterned sacrificial layer forming a combined patterned mask;

forming trenches in the substrate corresponding to the combined patterned mask; and

forming semiconductor devices from portions of the substrate between neighboring trenches.

14. The method of claim **13**, wherein forming the first patterned mask comprises:

depositing a first mask layer over the patterned sacrificial layer and in the first opening using an atomic layer deposition method; and

etching the first mask layer without using photolithography to form the first patterned mask.

15. The method of claim **13**, wherein forming the second patterned mask comprises:

depositing a second mask layer over the first patterned mask and in the second opening using an atomic layer deposition method; and

etching the second mask layer without using photolithography to form the second patterned mask.

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16. The method of claim **13**, wherein the first patterned mask and the second patterned mask comprise different materials and have different etch selectivities.

17. A method comprising:

forming a patterned sacrificial layer covering a first region of a substrate;

forming a first patterned mask covering a second region of the substrate without using photolithography;

after forming the first patterned mask, forming a second patterned mask covering a third region of the substrate without using photolithography;

removing the first patterned mask to expose the second region of the substrate;

etching the second region of the substrate to form trenches in the substrate; and

forming semiconductor devices from portions of the substrate between neighboring trenches.

18. The method of claim **17**, wherein forming the first patterned mask comprises:

depositing a first mask layer over the patterned sacrificial layer and the substrate using an atomic layer deposition method; and

etching the first mask layer to form the first patterned mask.

19. The method of claim **17**, wherein forming the second patterned mask comprises:

depositing a second mask layer over the first patterned mask and the substrate using an atomic layer deposition method; and

etching the second mask layer to form the second patterned mask.

20. The method of claim **17**, wherein the first patterned mask and the second patterned mask comprise different materials and have different etch selectivities.

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